



What Would Cesar Chavez Do?

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, March 15, 2010

Below are a few observations from last week.

Monday: Council study session on Airport

Overwhelming majority of Council thought outsourcing of janitorial to save \$3 million was a bad idea so it looks like we will lay people off and consider getting rid of the night time curfew in the future.

Monday Night: General Plan 2040 Task Force Meeting

Although the General Plan board members were informed that the City's budget problems are partially due to most of our land being dedicated to housing instead of jobs, the Task Force voted in favor of adding 300,000 people with a 14-11 vote. The two options were 200,000 or 300,000 new residents. Several task force members shared that they voted no because they wanted to see higher growth of 500,000 more residents to San Jose! I voted for the option that added 200,000 people by 2040.

Tuesday: Council Meeting

After 18 months of staff and paid consultant "research" regarding my Sept. 18, 2008 memo proposing that developers of affordable housing projects be required to pay park fees, as market-rate developers are required to, the question finally came to Council. I believe that people of lower income are deserving of 100 percent park fees/land dedicated, the Council decided to support the Housing Department's compromise that developers pay only 50 percent. To date, the City of San Jose has lost approximately \$90 million in park fees from developers because of this park exemption.

Are you familiar with the term, "What Would Jesus Do?" Well I wonder as we come up on Caesar Chavez Day, "What would Caesar Chavez do" if he was alive and on the Council. Considering that affordable housing provides for people of lower incomes and is often located in areas that do not have parks, would he vote for equity when it comes to parks in San Jose for all people?

The next agenda item on the council agenda that day was the Habitat Conservation Plan where it seemed that the Council had more sympathy for the checker spot butterfly than parks for people of all income levels.

Wednesday: Visit Medicinal Marijuana Collective in Oakland

One collective is on target to write a check to Oakland for \$360,000 in city taxes and another check to the State of California for nearly \$2 million in sales tax of which approximately \$200,000 will come back to Oakland; therefore Oakland will be receiving approximately a half a million dollars from one legal medical collective that employs 80 people with an average hourly pay of \$43.

Thursday Night: Neighborhood Association Meeting

I talked about the budget and announced to the audience that the City would be suspending the \$750K aquatics program for the 2010-2011 city-wide. I shared that the City could restore the entire program if we chose different ways to do city services, like outsourcing janitorial services at City Hall for example. There were many in the audience that felt that they did not care who cleaned city hall but they would rather have a summer aquatics program for youth or a library open.

Friday Morning: American Leadership Forum-panel discussion titled, "A new recipe for regional job growth."

Panel discussion of private sector and labor spoke to how the region can create jobs going forward. A business person asked the labor panelist, "What if public employees would take less in pensions to help balance the budget and avoid layoffs? Response from labor panelist was that, "Most of the deficit in San Jose is not pensions but debt service on City Hall."

Actually, the debt service on City Hall is \$24 million of which \$17.1 million is from the general fund out of a \$116.2 million general fund deficit. \$52.9 million is the amount the general fund must cover this year in increased pension contributions since the taxpayer must cover any losses in the pension funds. The \$52.9 million to cover pension losses is only a portion of the total amount devoted to pensions this year which is \$200.2 million.

Looking back in history on 5/14/02 the only votes against new city hall was Linda LeZotte and Chuck Reed.

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